



THE NORTHWESTERN UNIVERSITY

# Reviewing Stand

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### **Are We Drifting Toward Socialism?**

A radio discussion over WOR and the Mutual Broadcasting System

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Director, The Reviewing Stand

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**THE REVIEWING STAND** is a weekly radio forum presented by Northwestern University. The program was first broadcast by Station WGN, Chicago, October 14, 1934. It has been on the air continuously since that time, originating in the WGN studios, and, since 1935, carried by the stations of the Mutual Broadcasting System. **THE REVIEWING STAND** presents members of the Northwestern University faculty and distinguished guests from business, government, education, and the press in round table discussions of contemporary problems—the questions that are in the news. The program is under the direction of James H. McBurney, Dean of the School of Speech, Northwestern University; Miss Myrtle Stahl, Director of Educational Programs, WGN, Chicago.

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# Are We Drifting Toward Socialism?

MR. BORIN: Are We Drifting Toward Socialism?

MR. BYFIELD: We are not only drifting, we are floating just the way one would float down the Niagara River. And if you listen attentively you may hear the sound of falling water ahead.

MR. LAFOLLETTE: Mr. Byfield is mistaken in the sound he hears. That is the sound produced by an eddy when progress of the people meets the dam set up by reactionary forces. We are not drifting. We are going backward.

MR. BORIN: "Statism," "Creeping Socialism," "The Welfare State"—these phrases have emerged from the current speculation about the direction our political policies are taking. To discuss these trends the *Reviewing Stand* welcomes Charles M. LaFollette, former Congressman from Indiana, National Director of Americans for Democratic Action, and Robert S. Byfield, member of the New York Stock Exchange, who has served as a director of several businesses and has written extensively for financial and business publications.

## Floating?

Mr. Byfield, you said, "We are floating toward socialism." What do you mean, "We are floating toward socialism"?

MR. BYFIELD: It is coming upon us gradually. I would like to change my metaphor a little bit and tell you, in my opinion, socialism is coming to America through subsidy, subterfuge and slogans. First of all, socialism is coming to us because the federal government, through management and manipulation of the currency—and it has gotten larger and larger powers in that direction—has usurped private banking functions. So much so that

Marriner Eccles has stated recently that the Federal Reserve Board has become an engine of inflation.

Now, one of the major controls of economic power—and this has been a pattern in almost every European country which has drifted or rushed or floated toward socialism—has been that the federal government, the central government, has strengthened and increased its powers over the banking system. We have done that in a myriad of fashions. The federal government has virtual control of the lending and portfolio policies of about 15,000 commercial banks.

In the second place, as far as slogans are concerned, one of the methods by which socialism is coming to us is the vilification, by those who would have socialism come, of businessmen who stand between them and the achievement of their objectives, vilification of all people who oppose the grasp for power, particularly businessmen. In doing that they have twisted and distorted the meaning of words and phrases in order to confuse and distort the issue.

## The Brannan Plan

In the third place, socialism has been creeping up on us, and we have been going toward it, because there has been a steady undermining of the independence of the American farmer by subsidies and controls. Perhaps the peak of that type of legislation is the Brannan Plan which, according to Mr. Allan Kline, head of the American Farm Bureau Federation, is an ideal way to achieve complete control of the farmer. He said that if he wanted control he would use that method, and when the time came the farmer would do as he was told or he would fold up for lack of a govern-

ment check.

In the fourth place, we are approaching socialism because we have made labor organizations almost compulsory, and then we have given union leaders very autocratic powers without forcing equally large responsibilities for their conduct upon them.

In the fifth place, we have constantly increased the control and shackles of private business in order to center the power over private enterprise in the federal government. Almost every day you have evidence of that. As we are sitting here there is an inquiry or an investigation, or whatever it is called, going on in Washington to find out whether or not the steel industry has certain qualities of a public utility. And if the government does what it looks as though it wants to do, there will be increasing legislation along that line.

### 'Undermining Individualism'

In the next place, there has been a steady undermining of the tradition of American individualism by making as many people as possible dependent on government benefits. It makes them look to Washington. They get into the habit of doing that. They believe that there is where their standard of living lies. It is the current belief that the government accomplishes that.

Furthermore, we weakened the federated system by reducing the area of state sovereignty and substituted a greater centralized power in the White House and in the Executive part of government for it.

Furthermore, we are promoting inflation by continuous deficit financing which will eventually contribute to rising prices and thereby popularize greater controls. Look at the Spence Bill. Look at the Economic Adjustment Act, Senate Bill No. 281. There you have the whole blueprint and pattern for control of American industry.

And finally there is debilitated capitalism by confiscatory taxation which makes it difficult for savings to

flow into the industry. It makes it difficult for private individuals to own businesses and then the government will naturally have to step in.

MR. BORIN: Mr. Byfield, that was an explosive nine point "yes" to our question, "Are We Drifting Toward Socialism?" What is your answer to this question, Mr. LaFollette?

### 'Not A Good Title'

MR. LAFOLLETTE: I don't care for the wording of the title of this discussion, "Are We Drifting Toward Socialism?" because it is a sort of "have you stopped beating your wife?" question. If I answer the question, "No, we are not drifting toward socialism," then a clever opponent could interpret that to mean that America is rushing headlong toward socialism. But I shall answer the question anyway. We are not drifting toward socialism; we are not headed for socialism; we do not have socialism now; and those who shout the loudest about the so-called socialist threat know that this answer of mine is the truth.

Socialism is defined by all classical economists, that is, conservative economists, as government ownership of the major means of production and distribution. Neither the New Deal nor Fair Deal are socialistic under this standard definition. Finally, even if we assume that the New Deal and Fair Deal are socialism, which they are not, then we have had precious little socialism in the last ten years. From 1939, the date of the first minimum wage law, until Franklin D. Roosevelt's death, not a single one of the main domestic planks of the New Deal was enacted. Harry Truman has succeeded in passing only one—the low-income public housing law, which Senator Taft supported and which scraped through the House by one vote. Some one may wish to include the rise in the minimum wage from 40 to 75 cents an hour, but I can't consider it a real advance because the same bill removed at least 500,000 workers from the provisions of the old law.



So the record proves that we have not seen an advance of the Fair Deal program beyond the blockades set by that favorite of the reactionary scaremongers, Senator Robert A. Taft. If we've drifted toward socialism, which we have not, then it has been only with Mr. Taft's consent. But the truth is that there has been no drift—only the backwater from the dam of intrenched reaction.

### 'Drift'

The connotation of the word "drift" is that of irresistibly being carried into the fearful unknown by a mysterious force over which there is no control. We go forward or backward, making free choices in the voting booth to support Administrations or defeat them. We will remain free unless we are stampeded into a state of hysteria and persuaded to give up our freedoms.

No, we are not drifting toward socialism. Socialism is just the newest of the campaign slogans the reactionaries have devised to scare the voters. Before now the words were welfare state, regimentation, and so forth. But the voters have gone on supporting the New Deal and the Fair Deal. Naturally, in this set of circumstances, the opponents have to devise a new slogan each time they lose an election. I predict, however, that the voters will continue to support welfare programs so long as they are not confused and divided by the extremists of the far Right and the far Left.

There is evidence already that certain groups and individuals are using economic coercion, social ostracism, and character assassination to steer us into thought control and rigid conformity. Among these are Mr. John T. Flynn, author of *The Road Ahead*, with which reactionary groups are flooding the country, the Committee for Constitutional Government, the Constitutional Educational League, the National Association of Manufacturers, the American Medical Association, and the hatchet men for

certain big industrialists. I expect to prove these charges before this broadcast has ended.

If I have a minute I might say now that the control over banks was instituted with the Federal Reserve System in 1913, and I can show Mr. Byfield, when the time comes, that it was then called socialism by the banking interests of the country. I would also be able to show him that in the administration of William Howard Taft it was said that we were drifting toward socialism, which was in 1910.

**MR. BYFIELD:** Now, of course, there have been a great many laws on the statute books with regard to banking since the days of William Howard Taft, and one of them is that at any time the Treasury can sell five billion of bonds right to the Federal Reserve System. That is something that didn't exist at that time; that is something that would have staggered people in those days.

You used the word "reactionary" a number of times. That emphasizes what I said before about drifting toward socialism via a slogan. I think the use of the word reactionary is a slogan. That means a lot of things to a lot of people. When I was in Berlin last summer, General Kotikov, who was in charge of the Russian sector, told General Howley that his definition—and that of anybody in Russia—of a reactionary was anybody who wasn't a Communist, anyone who didn't go along with them. I think we have twisted the definition of that word reactionary to mean anybody who doesn't go along with any economic theory or any legislative program that happens to be popular at the moment.

### 'Progressive'

**MR. BORIN:** Do you think we need another word?

**MR. BYFIELD:** I don't know. I don't know what the word is. Perhaps it is "progressive." But, of course, they have twisted the word progressive.

Progressive now means to go along with those ideas that happen to be on the up and up and to be against those ideas that happen to be going down.

MR. LAFOLLETTE: As a member of the LaFollette clan, I have another complaint about progressive. They took the word progressive and gave it to Henry Wallace and now I can't even use it without arousing all the Senator McCarthys and the other hysteria raisers in the country. [Laughter.] Since you raise the question of slogans I want to talk today about the Plan for Action, devised by the American Manufacturers Association to put all people in this country and, in my opinion, rapidly, into a strait jacket of thinking. Is it to be done by social ostracism, economic coercion and making people believe that anyone who thinks that we might examine our economy, or our social and racial mores is un-American, and therefore not in favor of the American way of life?

### The American Guard

There is a thing in Anderson, Indiana called "The American Guard," financed by General Motors and, in my opinion, certainly every executive of Delco-Remy is an officer in it. The head of it is a man named Harbaugh who openly equates socialism and Communism and says they are both un-American. He is trying to drive out the Urban League because it stands for an intelligent standard on race relations; he has made the position of the YMCA in that community one of jeopardy because it has an open policy on race relations. Talk about slogans, the powers are in the hands of the people who have the money when it comes to slogans.

MR. BYFIELD: When these things happen, and I know nothing about them because I simply haven't got the information, when private industry or private groups practice these things it is intolerable and it is indefensible, and I go along with you. But when the government does it then it is not indefensible—it is

tyranny. I will show you something which is part and parcel of the welfare state. I am going to read from the text of Senate Bill 1645.

MR. LAFOLLETTE: What bill is that?

MR. BYFIELD: That is the bill establishing the Columbia Valley Authority which has the approval of the people who want to expand the government into the electric power business. I don't know whether they are liberals or neo-liberals, but I would like to read you one of the sections, Section 4, Subdivision E. It says in the creation of the Columbia Valley Authorities that all members of the board shall be persons who profess a belief in the feasibility and wisdom of this Act.

If that isn't thought control then I've never heard it. That is an intolerable invasion of the individualism of the American people, and I have been in Germany, Russia, and Italy.

MR. LAFOLLETTE: It seems to me that it is no more thought control than the attitude and actions of General Motors or any corporation that insists they will advance to their directorate and put in their executive position people who are interested in their purposes and their objectives as industrialists. They have that privilege. It seems to me that it is not thought control to say that people who shall administer a Valley Authority should be people who have a belief that it is possible to administer such an Authority. That isn't thought control in any shape or form. That is a statement of a very practical standard which business exercised at the time. I believe you will agree.

### TVA

MR. BORIN: Let me get this straight. You say the TVA or CVA is socialistic because it has a certain type of thought control.

MR. BYFIELD: That is only one aspect. That is a hidden aspect. As long as you mention the TVA I am going to say that I think that it is an outstanding example of socialism



and you don't need to take my word for it. That is exactly what Norman Thomas said recently and he ought to know what socialism is. Incidentally, I talked to Mr. Thomas recently and he said that his work was done, that social welfare and socialism, well, they are synonymous. He said that over the radio. He is very much pleased because he doesn't think there is much left for him to do.

I would like to go back to CVA and thought control. I don't see eye to eye with Mr. LaFollette. They go farther than that in another clause of the bill. It says that the CVA directors can decide whether you are to farm 10, 20 or 160 acres, and if you don't do what they tell you to do, you don't get any water. And if you know what that means in the Northwest, that is pretty bad. That is socialism par excellence. That is regional authority. The CVA is opposed by the people in the Pacific Northwest and they call the people from Washington who propagate that a lot of "carpetbaggers." They've got tougher words than we have down here in the East.

MR. LAFOLLETTE: I don't know the provisions of the CVA Act and don't profess to any more than I would ask you to know the provisions of a great many other acts. Teddy Roosevelt put in the limitation on receiving water for irrigation at 160 acres and that is one of the great fights in the central valley of California today. It is based on the proposition that you shall not let industrial farms take over all the benefits that arise out of the expenditures of public funds in the public interest, that we need to preserve the family-size farm. So if that is socialism then it goes back to Teddy Roosevelt's socialism.

### 'Enterprise Expanded'

With reference to the TVA, all I know about the TVA is that the income per capita in the Tennessee Valley has increased from \$148 in 1933 to \$797 in 1947, that individual enterprise has expanded repeatedly under the TVA. If I know anything about

it, the people of the TVA probably made the same kind of statement you say the people of the Columbia Valley are making today. Today you couldn't get a candidate elected for township trustee in the whole Tennessee Valley who opposes the TVA. Now, it is progress, it is acceptance, it is the difference between people being frightened off things and actualities.

MR. BYFIELD: There has been a gain in income and other aspects of the standard of living in Tennessee, but there has been an equally large gain in some of those other southern and southwestern states. You can't say that Tennessee has a monopoly on that. Furthermore, why shouldn't those people down in the Tennessee Valley love the TVA? That is the insidious part of socialism. It buys people, because they are getting subsidized power. They are not getting cheap power. I don't think there is any such thing as cheap government power. It is subsidized power, taking money from the people of New York and Vermont and California and giving those people down there power below economic costs.

### 'Increase Purchasing Power'

MR. LAFOLLETTE: If the people of the Tennessee Valley increase their capacity to buy, it helps the people of New York and Vermont. And the people of New York and Vermont have decided that by their political action a long time ago.

MR. BYFIELD: There is one more thing I would like to say before we leave the TVA. In economics everything is a double entry. If you give those people cheaper power by taxing the people in Vermont, New York and California, the taxes which are taken away from the people in those three states could have been used to increase their purchasing power, so you are gaining nothing. In fact, you are losing something.

MR. BORIN: Do you call that socialism?

MR. BYFIELD: I think it is socialism. That is the welfare state. You take out of one pocket and you put it into

another, and you lose something in the process.

MR. BORIN: In the same breath you said socialism and the welfare state. Would you equate the two?

### 'Thought Control'

MR. LAFOLLETTE: No, but I want to go back to this business of thought control for a minute. I want to pick up a very nice sermon which is spread by the Committee for Constitutional Government. This is a sermon by a devine of Nashville, Tennessee, Dr. Walter R. Courtenay. You can get the copies of the broadcast by Dr. Courtenay in quantities of 40 or more for two and a half cents each. You are told to send it to everybody in your community. He said, "It is time for the South to serve its purpose of preserving the Union and championing free enterprise." Of course, he is against the FEPC and against any progressive action. He is against free power. But he better not move over to Knoxville and make this sermon. The thing I want to point out to this gentleman is—and this is not to Mr. Byfield but to the Reverend Courtenay—that the South has always accepted and received more in flood control projects paid for by the federal government. Every time you want to turn these things over to the state, the people who yell the loudest come running to the federal Congress and say, "For goodness sakes, give us assistance." So there again, this is no progress toward socialism. This is the use of a false, economically unfair and, in my opinion, intellectually dishonest argument by a divine to spread thought control and fear in this country.

MR. BYFIELD: I don't know anything about this minister. I have heard other people from the pulpit condemn capitalism along with Communism and when you came right down to it they know nothing about economics and what makes the industrial clock tick or the wheels turn around. To stick to this question of slogans, I think

that the people who want to turn us into a unitarian socialistic state have had a head start on castigating the businessmen as well as my friend Bob Taft, who certainly doesn't need me to support him. He can stand on his own feet. Remember all the stories about the old order a few years ago; remember all the stories about the economic royalists? How about the nine old men? How about this slogan "boom and bust"? The fellows that put those over were past masters. What is happening this very day? Certain people in Washington, certain businessmen, are being called monopolists when they are not monopolists at all. A monopolist is one seller and you can't call 15 or 20 steel companies one seller. And if a man is a big monopolist he becomes a predatory monopolist. That is what I call the language of prejudice or the blueprint or tactics of deceit and the twisting of words to effect socialistic controls, and I am against it.

### Two Views

MR. BORIN: If I understand you correctly, Mr. LaFollette sees recent legislation as political power aimed at correcting economic abuses and Mr. Byfield sees it as a vicious plot to achieve political power for its own sake. Is that right?

MR. LAFOLLETTE: Yes, but Mr. Byfield, in my opinion, sees a ghost which doesn't exist. What I see is the propaganda of the Committee for Constitutional Action which says that we need now an additional \$250,000, plus \$125,000 monthly. That adds up to \$1,500,000 for twelve months and \$1,750,000, if you add the two hundred fifty, in addition to what they have—and to do, what? To distribute materials to stockholders, supervisory workers, thoughtful home owning employees and community opinion builders. I just read you something from a community opinion builder, the Reverend Courtenay. All of the power in this fight for people's minds and to force people into the acceptance of



something called the American way, which he equates as democracy in the capitalistic system as we have it today without any change, is in the hands of the people who have the money.

MR. BYFIELD: All I've got to say is that I don't know anything about this particular committee, but from the figures that you have read I think they are a lot of pikers. What is a million dollars compared to the tremendous propaganda organizations that Messrs. Brannan, Oscar Ewing and all of the other fellows like Chapman . . .

MR. LAFOLLETTE: You know that is not correct.

MR. BYFIELD: They've got 35,000 people on their payroll. Those fellows go around . . .

MR. LAFOLLETTE: If Congress caught one of them talking about something the Congress didn't like, the appropriations would go down.

MR. BYFIELD: That is theory. When a businessman comes to Washington to defend his own interests he is called

a lobbyist, but when these government fellows go around the country preaching their propaganda they are only marshaling public opinion. They don't ever travel. They just go on missions. That is where you people have these words all twisted from their dictionary meaning into emotional meanings. That is why you are outsmarting us and outtalking us. You are twice as articulate as we are.

MR. LAFOLLETTE: You sound like Arthur Krock who says that all the power is in the hands of reaction when the newspaper publishes only the things that reactionary publishers want and no one else can get a thing in the paper.

MR. BORIN: I am going to step in as referee before someone is floored with a verbal right cross. I think in moving from slogans to TVA to the question of who has the coercive power in this country, you gentlemen have demonstrated that here in the United States we are still free to air our opinions. May I say that we are glad it can happen on the Northwestern *University Reviewing Stand*.



## Suggested Readings

Compiled by Barbara Wynn, Assistant,  
Reference Department, Deering  
Library, Northwestern University



Chamber of Commerce of the United States. *Socialism in America; A Study by the Committee on Economic Policy*. Washington, D.C., The Chamber, 1950.

Convinced that America is moving in the direction of socialism, discusses such questions as, "How do socialism and capitalism compare as political and economic systems?"

ELDEAN, F. *The Trend of Socialization; Analysis of the Strategy, Techniques and Tactics of Leftist Groups*. New York, Fred Eldean Organization, Inc., 1949.

Describing the step by step march of socialism in England, declares that it will come in America through just such an insidious process.

FLYNN, J. T. *The Road Ahead: America's Creeping Revolution*. New York, Devin-Adair, 1949.

Shows how socialism can be advanced under a number of guises.

FINER, HERMAN. *The Road to Reaction*. Boston, Little, Brown, 1945.

An answer to *The Road to Serfdom*. Maintains that planning and liberty are compatible.

HAYEK, FRIEDRICH AUGUST VON. *The Road to Serfdom*. Chicago, University of Chicago Press, 1944.

Points out the dangers to democracy inherent in over-all, centralized planning.

University Debaters' Annual, 1948-49, pp. 117-50. New York, H. W. Wilson, 1949. Resolved: That the United States Should Adopt a System of Planned Economy.

Willamette University versus University of Redlands.

*American Affairs* 12:9-17, Ja., '50. "This Adventure in Human Enterprise." VANNEVAR BUSH.

An outstanding American scientist contends that through a "blind pursuit of security," we have been unconsciously drifting into socialism.

*American Magazine* 148:24-5+, O., '49. "U. S. at the Crossroads; Socialism or Free Enterprise." W. I. KING.

Describes the inducements of socialism, and tells how its results compare with those of capitalism.

*American Magazine* 148:24-5+, S., '49. "We Need a Fifth Freedom." H. W. STEINKRAUS.

Demands freedom from regimentation, and "warns of the dangers ahead on the road we are traveling."

*Collier's* 125:13+, Ap. 8, '50. "Is President Truman Taking Us Down the British Road?" R. A. TAFT.

With an affirmative answer, Senator Taft maintains that "Administration policies parallel the British Socialist program."



*Commercial and Financial Chronicle* 170:2413+, D. 15,'49. "How to Stop Socialism." E. L. LINSETH.

A prominent utility executive cites the rapid growth of federal ownership of electric plants as an example of the ever-widening intervention of government in private affairs.

*Commercial and Financial Chronicle* 170:2400+, D. 22,'49. "The Welfare State in the Light of Recent European Experience." R. S. BYFIELD.

Warning business men against the weapons of words that are being used against them, Mr. Byfield states that their "first task is to become fully aware of the tactics of deceit which are being used to change our social structure."

*Fortune* 39:116-8, F., '49. "How America Can Avoid Socialism; Europe's Capitalists Brought it on Themselves." ERIC JOHNSTON.

Asserting that the U. S. is further away from socialism than any other country in the world, tells how and why the European business man failed capitalism.

*Fortune* 40:65-9+, O., '49. "Greatest Opportunity on Earth; American Business Can Provide Alternative to the Welfare State." R. W. DAVENPORT.

Declares that the demand of the American people for "welfare" is a justifiable one, but that there is a way to satisfy it without recourse to the authoritarian state.

*Fortune* 39:69-73+, Mr., '49. "Socialism By Default." J. DAVENPORT.

Maintains that the Truman Administration, "without admitting it—maybe without knowing it," is pushing the U. S. toward socialism.

*Nation* 170:26-8, Ja. 14,'50. "Halfway to What?" R. NIEBUHR.

Declares that the highly pragmatic type of democracy condemned by reactionaries as a halfway house to Communism, "may prove better able to preserve democratic justice in a technical society than any of the alternatives to the left or right."

*Nation* 161:124-5, Ag. 11,'45. "Will America Go Socialist?" I. F. STONE.

Contents that America must follow the example set by Great Britain.

*Nation's Business* 37:29-31+, Ap., '49. "Our Rising Welfare State." E. P. SCHMIDT.

Ten ways, including the income tax, social security, rent control, through which the American brand of socialism, the welfare state, is being brought about.

*New York Times Magazine* p. 9+, Mr. 26,'50. "Affirmation of Faith in American Economy." S. H. SLICHTER.

A noted American economist states that although government intervention in economic affairs is growing, the most important decisions are still made, and will continue to be made, by the millions of consumers and business concerns.

*New York Times Magazine* p. 7+, D. 18,'49. "Are We Headed Toward Collectivism?" H. F. BYRD, P. H. DOUGLAS.

Pro and con discussion by Senators Byrd of Virginia and Douglas of Illinois.

*Town Meeting Bulletin* p. 1-16, Ja., 24,'50. "What Is the Difference Between Socialism and Social Welfare?" H. GAHAGAN DOUGLAS, and others.

Socialism and social welfare defined and compared.

*Town Meeting Bulletin* p. 1-22, Jly. 12,'49. "Does the Socialist State Tend to Destroy Individual Initiative?" ROBERT S. BYFIELD, and others.



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*List of all available Reviewing Stand  
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12. Are We Losing the Cold War in Europe?
13. Are We Losing the Cold War in Asia?
14. Should the Federal Government Support Farm Prices?
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17. Can We Stop Drunken Driving?
18. How Big Should Business Get?
19. Should the President Be Elected By a Direct Vote of the People?
20. What Can Medicine Do for the Aged?
21. What Should the Government Do for the Aged?
22. That Man John L. Lewis.

23. Christianity and Communism.
24. Is Aviation Fulfilling Its Peacetime Role?
25. We Forsee in 1950.
26. Selling Your Ideas on the Job.

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1. Is Mercy Killing Justifiable?
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3. What Is America Reading?
4. Should America Develop the World's Resources?
5. The Responsibilities of Business to Society.
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7. The Problem of Allergy.
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